

Glasgow's Response:

Children's Hearings Scotland, National Convener, Proposal for the Establishment of Area Support Teams

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Glasgow City Council and Partners believe that a great deal of consideration has gone into planning and developing this proposal and welcome the opportunity to make comment on the consultation.
- 1.2 The development of a national infrastructure for Children's Panels that improves and modernises the arrangements for the recruitment, training, support and monitoring of panel members through the single national body is welcomed. We feel that better more consistent decision making and sharing of best practice will result in better outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.3 The National Convener of Children's Hearing Scotland is consulting on a proposal to establish Area Support Teams that will replace the current structure:
 - Children's Panel Advisory Committees (CPAC)
 - CPAC chairs
 - CPAC members
 - Clerks
 - Panel Chairs
- 1.4 For clarity, we would have preferred specific questions to answer about the proposal, as it is: Section 3, "role of members" actually describes the membership not their role and the crucial role of the Clerk is discussed in section 22, headed, "conclusions".
- 1.5 The closing date for submissions on this consultation exercise is 21st October 2011.
- 1.6 In preparation, for the Council's response we brought together some of our partners in children's services into a focus group to discuss the proposals. Details of the attendees are attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.7 Glasgow is committed to its Children's Hearing Service, which is the busiest in Scotland with approximately 9000 hearings being held for 3000 children per year. Part of its success is that the service is well supported by the City Council and is coterminous with the city boundaries. However, that does not mean we are complacent, it was acknowledged within the focus group that we should use this time of change, to reflect and make improvements, particularly making clear the roles and responsibilities of the Children's hearing Panel and those of SCRA.

Comments

Section 3 Area Support Teams – The Roles of Members.

- 3.1.2 In Glasgow, we would want to continue with one children's Hearing Service that is coterminous with the boundaries of Glasgow City Council. As Glasgow is the largest children's hearing service in Scotland with approximately 650

panel members, we would suggest that the Local Authority should be able to nominate more than one local authority member on to the AST. However, we would ensure that the local authority members would not exceed one third of members, as stated in the Act.

The Act 12 (1) stipulated that it is the responsibility of the National Convener to establish and maintain the "Area Support Teams" in each area and therefore would have no issue with the National Convener appointing AST members.

- 3.1.3 All elected members in Glasgow, as Corporate Parents, have been offered training to raise awareness of the issues faced by children and young people in and leaving care.

We do not agree that elected members would find their role as Corporate Parents and members of the AST a conflict of interest, as they often bring expertise gained from life and professional experiences.

We agree that it is best for local authority AST members to be detached from children's social work services.

- 3.1.4 Accepted as stated above in 3.1.2.

- 3.1.5 In Glasgow, because we have approximately 650 members, it has been necessary to divide the panel members into 6 sub-committees. That is; two sub-committees to each of the three strategic areas of the city; North East, North West and South. We would suggest that the "sufficient other persons" for the Glasgow Areas Support Team should include; one sub-committee member to represent their strategic area on the AST. As panel members they will have a "strong interest in child welfare and an understanding of the Children's Hearings system, with the ability quickly to gain a good working knowledge of it", "...the appropriate skills to act in a constructive monitoring role" and "have gained practical experience of recruitment, investigating complaints, or a good knowledge of the organisation and management of training". Also included on the AST will be the current members of the CPAC who wish to transfer.

We look forward to receiving the national standard guidance on recruitment on Area Support Teams.

- 3.1.6 We understand that each AST will be chaired by one of its members, to be selected and appointed by the National Convener for a term of 3 years. If the chair of the CPAC agrees to transfer to the AST, does this mean they will automatically chair the AST, we need some clarification.

We agree that the input of panel members to AST is crucial we would suggest for Glasgow that this is the Authority Panel chair and the sub-committee representatives as described above in 3.1.5.

- 3.1.7 We agree that panel representatives on the AST who provide pastoral support to fellow panel members should not deal with complaints.

- 3.1.8 The pastoral role to be undertaken by identified AST members would be representatives from the sub-committees in Glasgow. Therefore, they would be known to and know the panel members in their area. This would, help to ensure that a proper network of support is available and that the issues arising

within each sub-committee of the city could be fully and equitably represented at AST level.

- 3.1.9 We look forward to receiving the national standards on the handling of complaints.
- 3.1.10 We look forward to receiving more specific role definitions for AST members from the National Convener.
- 3.1.11 We look forward to receiving the national training programme for AST in 2012.
- 3.1.12 The introduction of monitoring arrangements to ensure that the AST meets requirements is welcomed.

5. Area Support Teams- Proposed Structures –Glasgow

- 5.2 Glasgow City Council and Health Services have now moved from 5 to 3 strategic planning areas of the city; North East, North West and South.

Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, SCHEDULE 1
Children's Hearings Scotland Area support teams: establishment and membership (6)
An area support team may establish sub-committees consisting of persons who are members of the area support team. We would suggest that the new AST keep the current structure of 6 sub-committees, of which there are 2 sub-committees to each of the three areas.

- 5.3
to We agree
- 5.5

- 5.6 Membership of the proposed Glasgow AST. We agree the minimum core membership proposal of:
 - 6 National Convener appointees,
 - 1 local authority nominee,
 - 1 Panel member
 - 1 Clerk.

22. Conclusions

- 22.4 We agree that the support of Clerks and administrative staff is critical to the successful establishment and operation of Area Support Teams. However, we do not agree that a service level agreement is the answer. We feel that the arrangement you are proposing where the Clerk is an employee of the local authority, but accountable, via a service level agreement, to the National Convener is not sustainable, for a number of reasons:
 - It is the role of the children's hearing Panel to challenge the local authority, how would this sit with the Clerk being an employee of the Council?
 - The Council are committed to enabling their staff to develop new skills and experience. Would the Clerk working to the AST be able to benefit from such opportunities?
 - Currently, the Clerk resource is given in kind by the authority, however, in the current financial climate there can be no guarantee that this arrangement could continue.

Therefore, we would suggest that the Clerk should become an employee of the Children's Hearing (Scotland), where they have an opportunity to develop and progress.

Conclusion

In summary, Glasgow City Council and partners support the development of the Children's Hearing Area support Teams and look forward to receiving the national standards on recruitment and complaint processes.

APPENDIX 1

Children's Hearing Area Support Team Proposal

Consultation

Focus Group Attendees

Name	Organisation
Liz Fournia	Social Work Planning
Evelyn Lennie	Glasgow CPAC
Hugh McNaughtan	Glasgow Children's Panel
Iain Montgomery	Clerk to the CPAC
John Anderson	Glasgow Children's Panel
Alan Hughes	Glasgow Children's Panel
Stuart Simpson	Social Work, NE Area
Anne McHendry	SW Assistant Service Manager, South Area
John Steven	SW Team Leader, South Area
Gordon Brechin	SCRA
Joanne Garrett	SW Service Manager, South Area
Carol McCaig	SW Assistant Service Manager, FFC
Saima Sheikh	Social Worker, South Area
Pat Togher	SW Service Manager, North East Area

